



Engaging reluctant readers through paired reading

A resource to support a paired reading project

Age 8-12

CFE Second Level

Resource created by
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**Scottish
Book Trust**
inspiring readers and writers

Contents

Understanding reluctant readers	2
Creating reading champions	2
All texts are good texts	3
Reading role models	4
Reading challenges	4

About this resource

This resource has been created to help you run a paired reading project in your school or education setting. The resource has been created to accompany our [paired reading learning resource](#), which gives more detailed direction on planning and running a paired reading project. This resource is designed to help you explore how you can nurture a love of reading in reluctant readers through a paired reading project, and includes activities that will support pupils to embark on personal reading journeys.

Understanding reluctant readers

Reading is a hugely enjoyable pastime and we know that it is highly beneficial for our [mental and social wellbeing](#), as well as [boosting our chances of success in life](#).

However, we also know that many pupils are reluctant to engage with reading in or out of school time.

Key to changing pupil's perceptions of reading and books is to first spend time considering why individual pupils are reluctant to engage. Pupils might be reluctant readers because they:

- have particular learning difficulties or additional needs which act as barriers to engagement with texts
- experience reading only in a remedial learning context and, therefore, lack confidence or feel that reading is as something that they are not good at compared to their peers
- can read competently but have not had a positive reading experience and, therefore, prefer to engage with other activities and avoid reading
- can't find books they like or are not encouraged to engage with texts they may enjoy

Below are some strategies you can use to create a positive reading environment in your school and address some of the barriers and issues listed above.

Creating reading champions

To help your pupils become enthused and invested in their paired reading, you can give pupils the role of reading champion. The role of a reading champion is to share the joy of reading with others; both their reading buddy and across the school. By taking on this role, we hope that your older pupils will take on more responsibility and be actively involved in their own and their peers' reading journeys. You can choose to use this name or workshop with pupils to develop a more creative title that fits your setting.

In our 'mission pack', which you will find in the [paired reading toolkit](#) on our website, you will find worksheets and letters to help you outline the role of reading champion to your pupils. It will help you to present the role of reading champion as a special mission for which only a handful of pupils have been chosen. Presenting paired reading like this will help to provide pupils with a positive learning experience, which can be a powerful way to change attitudes to reading.

For further confidence building and skills development, you can ensure that your reading champions are fully involved in planning their paired reading sessions and any additional activities. Encourage pupils to plan and lead craft and art activities with their buddy. You can explore our [paired reading learning resource](#) for guidance on running the sessions and additional activities.

All texts are good texts!

When developing a love of reading in young people, you should not worry too much about the type or quality of text your pupils are engaging with – all texts are good texts if they are appealing to the reader.

Consider making alternative texts available to your pupils and allowing pupils to use them in paired reading when appropriate. Alternative texts could be:

- graphic novels, manga and comic books
- wordless picture books
- short reads such as Barrington Stoke titles
- picture books
- magazines, web sources, collector cards, blogs
- non-fiction books
- audiobooks
- poetry with pace, rhythm, rhyme and humour
- narrative poetry books
- books related to a pupil's favourite activities or sports
- books about movies, TV series and video games

Get to know your pupils' passions and find books that relate to their interests. Talk to your local librarian, take a trip to your local bookshop to flick through titles or get in touch with Scottish Book Trust to discuss authors and ideas. Why not incorporate pupil choice by arranging a trip with your reading champions to your local library or bookshop?

Some great book lists can also be found at:

- scottishbooktrust.com/book-lists
- booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/bookfinder/

Reading role models

It is really important for pupils to see the adults in their lives as readers. Talk about all the different things you read – from novels to blogs, travel guides, website and newspapers. By sharing your reading, it will send pupils a message that reading is enjoyable and worthwhile.

Reading aloud to your pupils can also ignite a love of stories. Find an engaging short story and let your pupils relax and listen. Your reluctant readers may be surprised by how much they enjoy it.

For a group you are working with on a regular basis over a longer period, read aloud a full novel to them. Choose one that they would not select themselves, and one that will challenge their reading ability. [Jackie Coroon](#) at Aberdeenshire Libraries has taken this approach with reluctant readers, exploring more challenging texts, and has had excellent results for reading progression and pupil enthusiasm.

Reading challenges

One of the best ways to present reading activities to get buy-in from pupils is as reading challenges. As well as carrying out paired reading sessions, you can select challenges for your reading champions to take part in. It may be a good idea to provide your reading champions with a short list of challenges to choose from to allow for pupil choice.

You can use the report card in the 'mission pack' to record both paired reading sessions and when pupils complete a reading challenge.

You can choose to do as many or as few of the challenges as you wish. The project model is entirely flexible and you should adapt it according to the resources and time you have in your school setting.

Reading challenges that reading champions can carry out independently or as a small group:

- Volunteer to tidy your class or school library
- Share a book recommendation with the rest of your class
- Write a letter to your favourite book character
- Read a comic book then have a go at writing your own comic strip featuring the same characters
- Read the first page of five different books and read the one you like best
- Create a book trailer for the book you are currently reading
- Write to an author whose work you enjoy

- Write a note to an anonymous reader, put it in a book and leave the book somewhere for a person to find
- Write a story based on the pictures in a wordless picture book
- Make your own reading den either at home or at school and take a photo of it
- Read a spooky story at night time

Reading challenges that reading champions could lead involving the whole class or school:

- Decorate your classroom door as a book cover
- Organise a 'dress up as your favourite character from a book' day
- Organise an event where your class will watch an event from our Authors Live on Demand library.
- Organise a school book quiz
- Organise a DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) week or day
- Organise an extreme photo challenge where pupils are asked to submit photos of themselves 'reading in a strange place' such as on a bridge, with pets, or during their weekend job as a secret agent!
- Organise a 'Where's Wally' hunt where reading champions dress up as Where's Wally and the pupils have to find them hiding in the school
- Write your own class book. You could choose a theme and work in groups, taking it in turns to write a chapter based on what the group before wrote.